

## Overpass in American Fork to be demolished



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**Stacy Johnson** - Daily Herald

A tanker-truck accident in American Fork may force commuters to take a longer route to get across I-15 for a couple of years.

The Sam White Lane overpass, just south of 500 East in American Fork, was severely damaged Thursday when a flatbed semitrailer carrying large empty tanks, which were too tall to clear the height requirements, ran into the overpass, according to Utah Highway Patrol spokesman Cameron Roden.

The overpass was closed indefinitely Thursday night, and on Friday, UDOT officials said they are now looking to tear the structure down.

UDOT spokesman Adan Carillo said UDOT already had plans to demolish the overpass later this fall, but Thursday evening's accident may mean that the demolition will come sooner rather than later.

"The accident [Thursday] night had significant enough damage that we are closing the overpass down until we demolish it," Carillo said. "It proves our idea that the overpass needs to be torn down for safety reasons."

UDOT is currently discussing its plans with American Fork officials, as well as residents and business owners in the area. It will then find a contractor and begin demolition.

The overpass will be rebuilt, but not until the Interstate 15 realignment and reconstruction project begins in Utah County in 2010.

Until then, Carillo said, commuters will have to use a detour.

"We realize it will probably be a headache for Monday's commuters when they realize that the bridge is closed," Carillo said. "But we would prefer that they take a safe detour rather than expose them to a structure that is not totally sound."

Thursday's accident is not the first time a truck has hit that overpass, according to Carillo.

"Approximately, that overpass averages one accident per month," Carillo said. "It is usually because the truck drivers don't see the two warning signs about the low bridge. We have also had incidents where truckers realize that it is low when they are driving up to it, and have had to call the Highway Patrol to close a lane to let them back up and get safely on the exit ramp."

The truck driver from Thursday's accident was cited for an oversight permit violation, Roden said.

When he hit the overpass at about 7:30 p.m., one of the tanks on his trailer rolled off and went into northbound lanes where it was hit by an SUV. The SUV burst into flames, and both passengers -- a male and a female, both in their 20s -- sustained minor injuries and were able to get out of the vehicle. Both were transported to the American Fork Hospital, Roden said.

The interstate was closed until about 10 p.m., when all lanes re-opened. Carillo said that travel under the overpass remains safe, even though the road above is closed.